

# RAILROADED

## HOW THE DAR SAVED THE FORT PITT BLOCK HOUSE

By Emily M. Weaver

Most Pittsburghers know that the Fort Pitt Block House, located within Point State Park, is the city's oldest building, but few know how precarious its survival has been. A century ago, the struggle to save the Block House involved some of the wealthiest women in Pittsburgh fighting some of the most powerful men of their time.

The Block House was built in 1764 as a “redoubt”: the first line of defense just outside the walls of Fort Pitt. The fort was demolished soon after, but the Block House survived since being built of stone and brick made it a desirable dwelling. However, by 1850, the Point District had become the city's most-populated and run-down neighborhood, with the Block House just another worn tenement. In his *Pittsburgh Directory for 1850*, Samuel Fahnestock made special mention that “the only remaining monument of British skill and labor ... should be preserved and kept in repair.”<sup>1</sup>

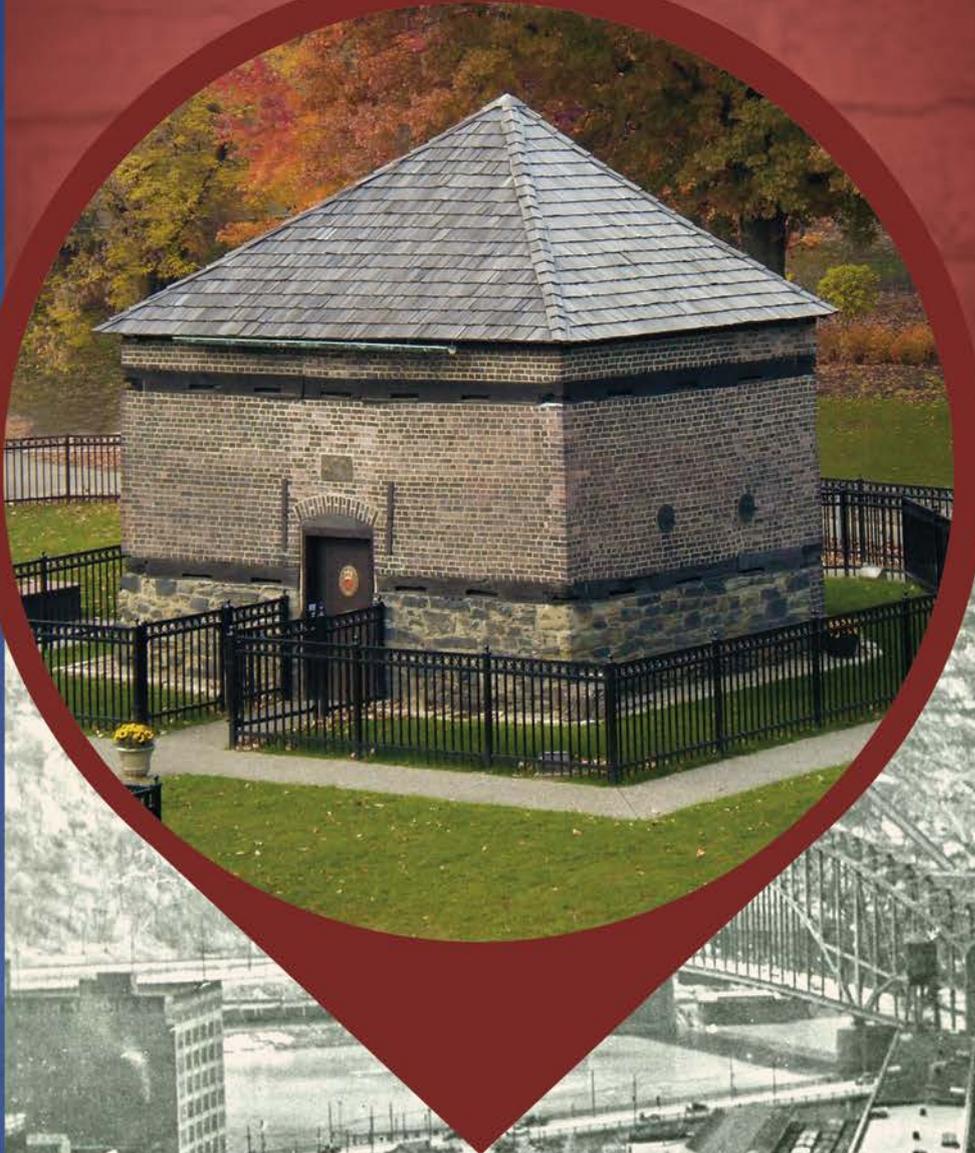


## THE POINT

became an industrial rail yard by the early 20th century, engulfing the tiny Block House.

**INSET:** The Fort Pitt Block House, in Point State Park, is the oldest architectural landmark in Pittsburgh.

Fort Pitt Society Collections. Photo by Kelly Linn.



Looking west at the Point, c. 1930, with the Exposition Buildings prominent to the right along the Allegheny River.

HHC Détra L&A.



The portrait that Mary Elizabeth Croghan Schenley sent to the DAR in 1892.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



An 1889 map of the Point shows a mix of housing and industry. The Block House has been surrounded by Fort Street, Point Alley, and Penn Avenue, plus is mistakenly listed as "Old Fort Duquesne."

University of Pittsburgh, Archives Service Center, G.M. Hopkins Maps Collections.

It took more than 40 years, but a group of wealthy Pittsburgh women finally acted upon those words. The Pittsburgh Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was formed in June 1891 to educate the public on the importance of American history through commemoration and preservation of historic landmarks and events. The ladies especially wanted to preserve and protect the Block House; the building was tiny but it had witnessed the entire history of Pittsburgh from its early days as a frontier town through its transformation into an industrial center. The Block House still stood in its original location but years of being used as a home in the midst of a large slum district had taken a toll. The Pittsburgh Chapter wanted to restore the structure back to its 1764 appearance and open it to visitors as a way to both preserve and teach its history.

The Point District was almost entirely owned by Mary Elizabeth Croghan Schenley, granddaughter of Pittsburgh settler James O'Hara. O'Hara purchased the Point (including the Block House) in 1805 and turned the district into leased housing. The property and other holdings came into Mary Schenley's hands with the passing of her mother, Mary O'Hara Croghan, in 1827, when Mary was but one year old. At 15, the heiress famously eloped with British Captain Edward Schenley, who was three times her age. Spending most of her life in London with her husband and children, Schenley became an absentee owner of a vast amount of property in the Pittsburgh area.<sup>2</sup>

Many individuals and organizations tried to save the Block House by asking Schenley for its ownership. Every request was denied, including one by the city of Pittsburgh (which had already received the land in Oakland that

became Schenley Park). Despite this record of rejection, Schenley gave her consent in 1892 when the newly organized Pittsburgh Chapter DAR asked for possession of the structure. Perhaps it was because most members of the chapter were first and second cousins to Mary Schenley—although the extent of any connection is up for debate since she rarely visited Pittsburgh. She responded graciously to the DAR's request in a letter dated May 23, 1892, in which she bestowed the Block House and a small amount of surrounding property. Schenley also accepted the chapter's offer of a lifetime DAR membership and promised to send along her portrait so that it could be displayed inside the Block House. It was at the Pittsburgh Chapter's one-year anniversary meeting on June 10, 1892, that the gifting of

the Block House from Mary Schenley was formally announced.<sup>3</sup>

The next letter from Schenley in August 1892 provided more exact terms for the Block House and surrounding property: "I have now written to Mr. Herron requesting him to prepare the deed giving to the association the old Fort with 80 feet on the new street, running back 80 or 90 feet—I hope this will be satisfactory." The proposed street, O'Hara Avenue, would run between the two east-west streets, Penn Avenue and Duquesne Way, as a way to clear some of the slums. It also meant the closing of the short north-south streets, including those on either side of the Block House that provided access, Fort Street and

Point Alley. This was fine with the DAR, as new access could be made to Penn or the new O'Hara Avenue.<sup>4</sup>

Before a deed could be drawn, the Pittsburgh Chapter had to incorporate.<sup>5</sup> The official incorporation (renamed the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania) was recorded November 12, 1892, for "maintaining private parks in which to preserve the Block House." This name remained in use until June 1917, when it was changed to the Fort Pitt Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania—the name

still used today.<sup>6</sup> In 1894, the city councils passed an ordinance allowing for the location of the proposed O'Hara Avenue; the Block House deed was drawn up and sent overseas to Mary Schenley for her signature and approval. By April 1894, the deed was recorded, providing the Fort Pitt Society with the Block House free of charge from Mary Schenley.<sup>7</sup> The agreement also included a strip of property 20 feet by 90 feet to give access to Penn Avenue.<sup>8</sup>

Although the deed seemed fine, the technical language stripped the society of its rights in regards to the opening and closing of adjacent streets:

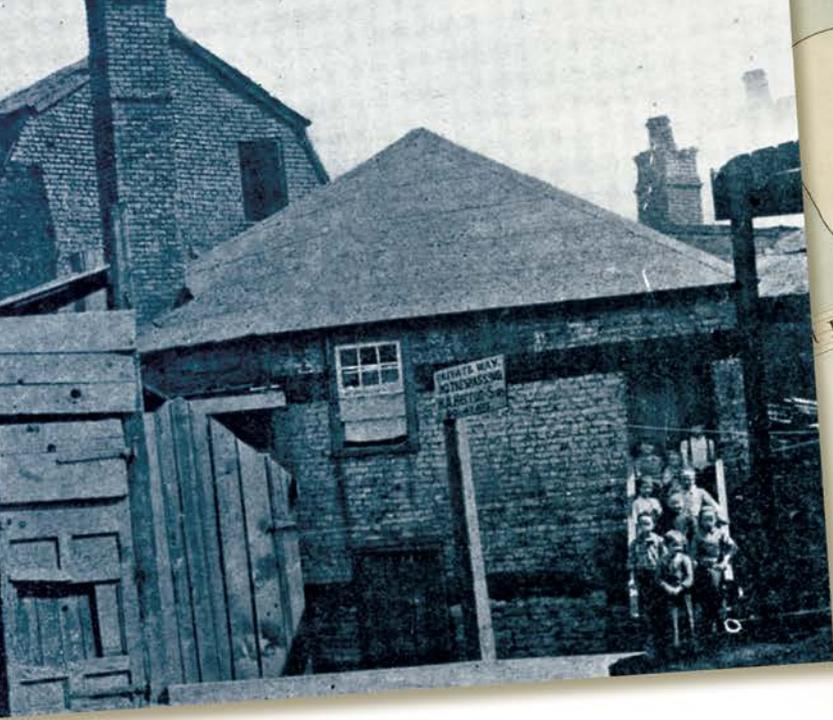


Original letter from Mary Schenley to Amelia Neville Shields Oliver allowing the Daughters of the American Revolution to have the Block House.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.

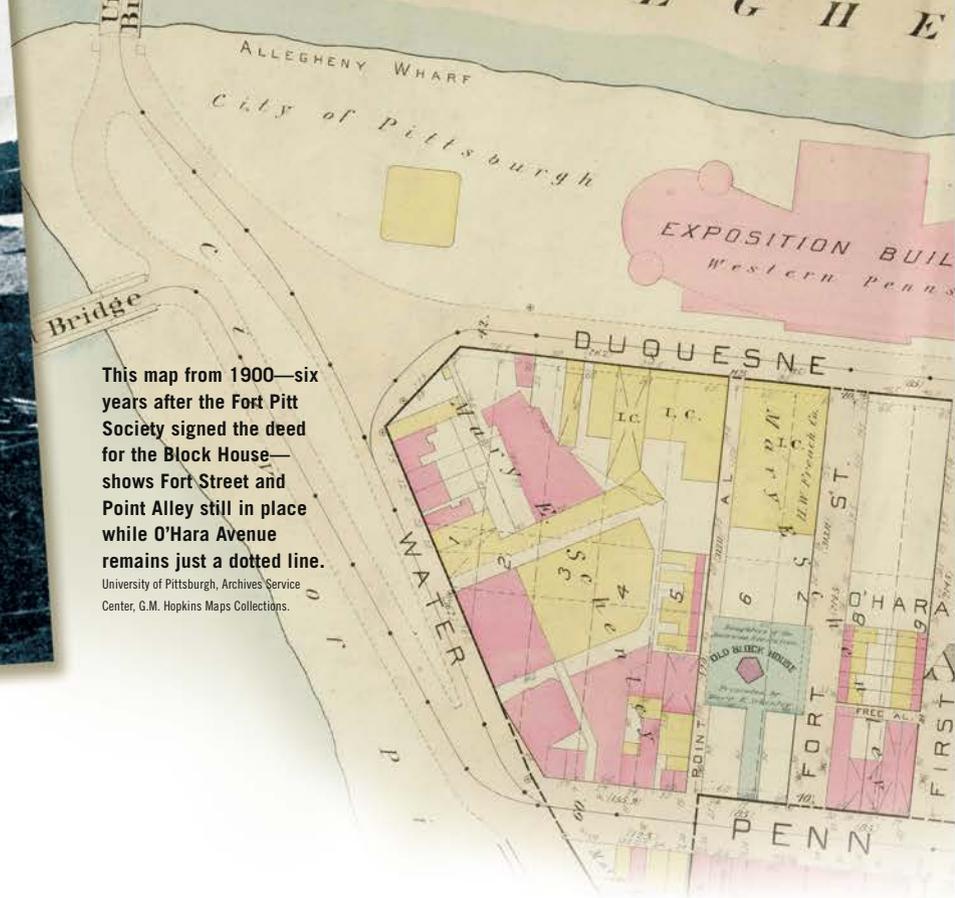


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A family at the Block House, 1893, pictured in *Fleming's Views of Old Pittsburgh*.

HHC Detre L&A.



This map from 1900—six years after the Fort Pitt Society signed the deed for the Block House—shows Fort Street and Point Alley still in place while O'Hara Avenue remains just a dotted line.

University of Pittsburgh, Archives Service Center, G.M. Hopkins Maps Collections.

[The] right of the party of the first part [Schenley] to represent said above described real estate in all proceedings looking to the opening of O'Hara Avenue and the vacation of Fort Street and Point Alley, the purpose of the party of the first part being to retain, reserve and not part with the right to petition the City of Pittsburgh, in behalf of said real estate, to open said O'Hara Avenue and to vacate said Fort Street and Point Alley; and she hereby reserves said right to herself, her heirs, executors and administrators, without liability however, for any assessment of benefits on said real estate by reason of said opening or vacations.<sup>9</sup>

The ladies made no protest over this wording. In their eyes, why would they need to? The section of the deed that the women feared most was the reversionary clause. The society's mission with the Block House, as defined in the deed, was in "maintaining, preserving and keeping in good condition said 'Block House,' perpetuating the historical associations surrounding the same, improving

and suitably maintaining the above described ground enclosing and about said 'Block House,' preserving archaeological remains and promoting historical research."<sup>10</sup> The reversion clause of the deed declared that if at any point the Fort Pitt Society and its successors should prove unable to fulfill its mission of preserving and maintaining the Block House for historical purposes, the property would immediately revert back to Mary Schenley and her heirs. This clause made the Society more determined than ever to save the Block House and make Schenley and the city of Pittsburgh proud of its preservation efforts.

The Fort Pitt Society moved forward with restoration by first evicting the tenants of the Block House. Tenants of the other structures within the property were also removed so the buildings could be dismantled. The only one left standing was a small rental fronting the Penn Avenue strip that the ladies decided to continue leasing and use the income to help support the Block House. Since Fort Street was still open, the women felt no pressure to use

the Penn Avenue strip as an entrance to the site. The restoration of the Block House and the renovation of its grounds were completed by the summer of 1895.<sup>11</sup>

Years passed with no sign of Fort Street and Point Alley closing—or of O'Hara Avenue being built. The Fort Pitt Society kept the Block House free and open for visitors, selling souvenirs to help support its operation, and maintaining the rental property facing Penn Avenue. At the end of 1898, it was announced that a history of the forts at the Point would be published by the society.<sup>12</sup> *Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt* included a brief account of the Block House and its plan that as soon as the ordinance was carried out, "passageway to Penn Avenue will be opened, and a substantial fence take the place of the temporary one at present on the ground."<sup>13</sup>

In December 1901, nearly nine years after the ordinance had been passed for the opening of O'Hara Avenue, city councils announced that the street would not open. In fact, the ordinance had only approved the street's

location, not for its opening; nonetheless, it was entirely thrown out by the councils. Imagine the ladies' surprise when it was also announced that Fort Street and Point Alley would still close; the only remaining streets at the Point would be Duquesne Way and Penn Avenue.<sup>14</sup>

It was discovered that a “warehouse syndicate” had purchased an option on the Schenley property to redevelop the Point District into storage facilities. Would the Block House be surrounded by towering warehouses? How would people access the site? The women figured they might have to give up some property, or worse, demolish the rental sitting within their strip of property leading to Penn Avenue, but that would mean losing revenue for operations. After consulting with their lawyer, the ladies arranged to meet with the representative of the syndicate, Franklin F. Nicola.<sup>15</sup>

Nicola was well known as a real estate developer and land agent. He had worked with the property holdings of the Schenley estate, Henry Clay Frick, and other wealthy Pittsburghers. His development of Schenley property in modern-day Oakland led to the creation of the Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall, the Hotel Schenley (now the University of Pittsburgh Student Union), and the Syria Mosque (now demolished). Eyeing the valuable Point District, Nicola saw an opportunity to develop it into industrial space for the railroad. The Pennsylvania Railroad, in particular, was interested in using the Point as a terminus for its rail lines.<sup>16</sup>

Nicola met with the Fort Pitt Society on December 13, 1901, where he proposed that the ladies give up part of their property to the syndicate in exchange for \$10,000 in damages. He also suggested that their Penn Avenue rental be removed so the Block House entrance could be moved from Fort Street to Penn Avenue. The Fort Pitt Society resisted, since forfeiting property would only bring the Block House closer to the encroaching industries.



Postcard image of the Block House site c. 1900, following its restoration.  
Fort Pitt Society Collections.

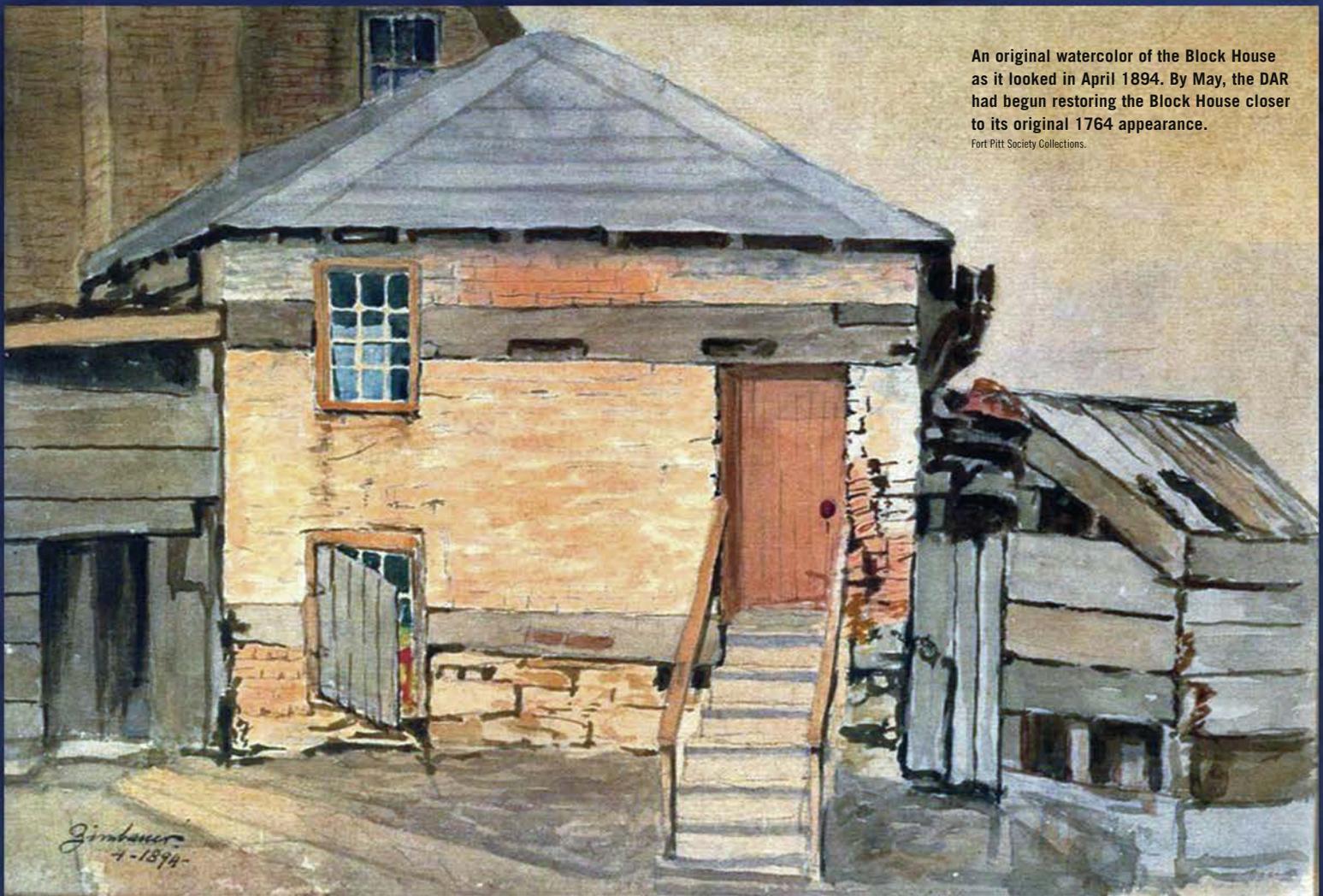
Nicola responded by increasing his offer: I hereby agree to pay to the Daughters of the American Revolution ... \$25,000 in cash on condition that they relinquish all right, title and interest in the property now occupied by the Old Block House.... I agree to remove from its present location—the Old Block House—to such location in Schenley Park as the D.A.R. elect. When removed the Block House will be put upon a satisfactory foundation; an iron fence with stone posts will be placed about the Block House, all of which work shall be under the supervision and subject to the approval of the D.A.R. and without expense to them. Further, I will agree that a tablet shall be erected on Penn Avenue on the present property of the D.A.R., without expense to them, which tablet shall be a memorial of the Fort and shall be arranged according to their instructions.<sup>17</sup>

It would have been understandable for the Pittsburgh DAR to take the cash and move the Block House to Schenley Park. What sort of future could the Block House have at the Point, surrounded by industry? A park seemed much better suited to host a historical structure, with a marker at the original site.

But to Nicola's astonishment, the Fort Pitt



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An original watercolor of the Block House as it looked in April 1894. By May, the DAR had begun restoring the Block House closer to its original 1764 appearance.  
Fort Pitt Society Collections.



**“WE HAVE BEEN TOLD that when the syndicate begins to drive piles all around the Block House that historic little structure will undoubtedly be wrecked.”**

Society refused “Schenley’s offer” to move the Block House. Fearing perhaps the wrath of their benefactress, the women stated publicly that it was not Mrs. Schenley’s offer but the offer of Nicola and the warehouse syndicate. The president of the Fort Pitt Society, Matilda Wilkins Denny, added that the women refused to be stymied by Nicola’s actions, stating, “We have been told that when the syndicate begins to drive piles all around the Block House that historic little structure will undoubtedly be

wrecked. That is scarcely possible, and it does not frighten us to be told such things.”<sup>18</sup>

Nicola made a last-ditch attempt to get the Society on his side. Rumors were spreading—many started by Nicola himself—that not all of the women were on board with keeping the Block House at the Point. It was said that some women felt that the Block House would be better protected in Schenley Park. Wouldn’t they be going against their mission of preserving and protecting the Block House

if they left it in the middle of an industrial district? Nicola asked for a private meeting with five Fort Pitt Society women that were most likely to change their stance: Matilda Wilkins Denny, Josephine Alden McConway, Mary Elliott McCandless, Anne McDowell Price Childs, and Rachel Larimer Mellon.

Denny was chosen in particular because of remarks she made in a letter to Schenley’s land agent, Colonel William A. Herron, voicing support for the closing of Fort Street since Penn Avenue would remain open, contrary

to the Fort Pitt Society. Matilda's father had been the first mayor of Pittsburgh and an early president of the Pennsylvania Railroad.<sup>19</sup>

Josephine McConway was married to William McConway, the owner of the McConway & Torley Company, which produced Janney couplers for locomotive trains. He publicly voiced his opinion for Block House removal, and Nicola may have assumed that Josephine would support her husband.

McCandless was the daughter of the locally renowned Judge Wilson McCandless and the sister of Stephen C. McCandless, a former clerk of the U.S. District Court and a trustee of the Dollar Savings Bank in Pittsburgh. Childs was the wife of industrialist Albert H. Childs, who also served on the

boards of various financial institutions and hospitals in the city.<sup>20</sup>

The most interesting of the five was Rachel Larimer Mellon, a member of the prestigious Mellon family of Pittsburgh. Rachel was vice-president general for the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her husband, James Ross Mellon, was the son of Judge Thomas Mellon, founder of T. Mellon & Sons bank. One of Rachel's brothers-in-law was Andrew Mellon, the longest-serving U.S. treasurer in history and one of the wealthiest men in the world. Her son, William Larimer Mellon, Sr., was also prominent, soon to play a key role in forming Gulf Oil. Rachel's father, William Larimer, was himself a railroad baron and landowner, being the former president of

the Pittsburgh & Connellsville Railroad. With so many important connections, it was no wonder that Nicola would choose Mellon for the meeting.<sup>21</sup>

All five women, however, refused to meet with Nicola. Despite their social standing and the opinions of their menfolk, the women of the Fort Pitt Society remained steadfast in their belief that the Block House should stay in its original location. By 1902, the DAR took a united front led by the regent of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Edith Darlington Ammon. If one were to select a single woman as the leading advocate for the Block House, Edith Ammon would be above and beyond the first choice. Born just outside of Pittsburgh on her family's estate, Guyasuta, Ammon had a passion for

Members of the Pittsburgh Chapter DAR stand in front of the Block House on the 15th anniversary of the founding of the chapter, 1906. Fifth from left is Rachel Larimer Mellon, who also served as the vice president-general for the National Society DAR.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



history and preservation. This was instilled by her parents, William and Mary Carson O'Hara Darlington, who collected artifacts and manuscripts on early Pennsylvania history, most of which are now held in the Darlington Memorial Library at the University of Pittsburgh. Ammon joined the Pittsburgh Chapter DAR in 1891; by 1899 she was elected a regent of the chapter, a post she would hold for 10 years.<sup>22</sup>

Ammon immediately set out to defeat the warehouse syndicate by publishing news articles denouncing the syndicate's plans and garnering support for the Fort Pitt Society's cause. She also discovered that a petition had been presented to councils asking to close Fort Street and Point Alley—these were signed by Schenley's land

agent John W. Herron and warehouse syndicate representative Franklin F. Nicola.

Ammon was outraged, feeling that neither man could legally sign such a petition since they were not property owners of the Point District. Mary Schenley was the primary owner of the district, and she had reserved all petitioning rights on the Block House property for herself. This meant that only she could legally sign a petition for the closing and opening of streets. Nicola had an option on the Point property but not actual ownership. John Herron's signature was a bit more legitimate since he was Mrs. Schenley's power-of-attorney. The Fort Pitt Society decided to file

suit in February 1902 against Franklin Nicola, John W. Herron, the city of Pittsburgh, and, surprisingly, Mary E. Schenley.<sup>23</sup>

The Fort Pitt Society also petitioned city council's Finance Committee for the creation of a park at the Point, simply called "Point Park." With 150 signatures of prominent men and women throughout Pittsburgh, the ladies presented their petition to the committee a day before filing their lawsuit against the city and Nicola. According to one of the directors of the Fort Pitt Society, Mary Kingsley Clarke, other cities

are erecting monuments to commemorate the brave deeds done there. We have a monument in that scarred, weath-

The Fort Pitt Society won a court battle against the warehouse syndicate in June 1902, but the victory was short-lived: the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania overturned the lower court decision that October.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



Edith Darlington Ammon served as the regent of the Pittsburgh Chapter DAR from 1899 to 1909; she also served as the president of the board of directors for the Fort Pitt Society from 1907 to 1919.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



er-beaten old “Block House,” more inspiring than the most significant pile of granite could be, and which commemorates deeds as brave as ever stood recorded. If anything is to be done to save the “Block House” and to beautify that part of the city, it must be done now. We are working for the past, the present, and time to come.<sup>24</sup>

The Finance Committee sent the petition on to city councils where it sat for months due to disagreements between council members over whether or not the Point was the proper place for a park. There was also concern about the cost of building and maintaining such a park. Nicola and the syndicate especially focused on that when criticizing the idea. Were citizens expected to pay for the park with

tax dollars? Who would even visit a park in downtown where the smoke and noise were almost unbearable? Realizing that the councils would most likely not pass the petition, the Fort Pitt Society asked the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce for support. By June 1902, the decision was made: the Block House should remain in its original location, but a park at the Point was out of the question. Defeated and deserted by both city councils and the chamber, Edith Ammon and the other ladies focused on saving the Block House through legal action.<sup>25</sup>

The lawsuit filed in February 1902 was heard by the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County in June. Despite arguments that the Fort Pitt Society was not the official

owner of the Block House due to its rescinding of property rights to Mary Schenley in 1894, the court ruled in favor of the DAR by declaring the ordinances to close Fort Street and Point Alley null and void. It seemed as though the Society had won its battle but within months, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania overturned the ruling. The higher court felt that as power-of-attorney, John W. Herron did have the right to sign the petition as the majority owner of the Point District. It also stated that since the DAR had willingly signed away its property rights in the 1894 deed, there was little sympathy for the women’s cause.<sup>26</sup>

Then in October 1902 it was announced that Henry Clay Frick, infamous coal and coke baron and former right-hand man of

The Daughters of the American Revolution felt deserted when the Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce rejected plans for a park at the Point that would help preserve the Block House.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



Andrew Carnegie, had purchased the entire Schenley property at the Point for \$2 million! His intention was to sell or lease the area to the Pennsylvania Railroad.<sup>27</sup> He also secured the reversion clause from the Block House deed for only \$10. If the ladies were to fail in their mission to protect and preserve the historic building, it would revert to Frick whereupon it would be demolished.

Edith Ammon and the ladies realized that to go up against Frick and the Pennsylvania Railroad would be far more difficult than their battles with Nicola and the city. Ammon went to her next plan: passing a state law to save the

**Also revealed in October 1902 was that Henry Clay Frick had purchased the Point from Mary Schenley for \$2 million. Frick then sold the property to the Pennsylvania Railroad.**

Library of Congress, ggbain-07131.



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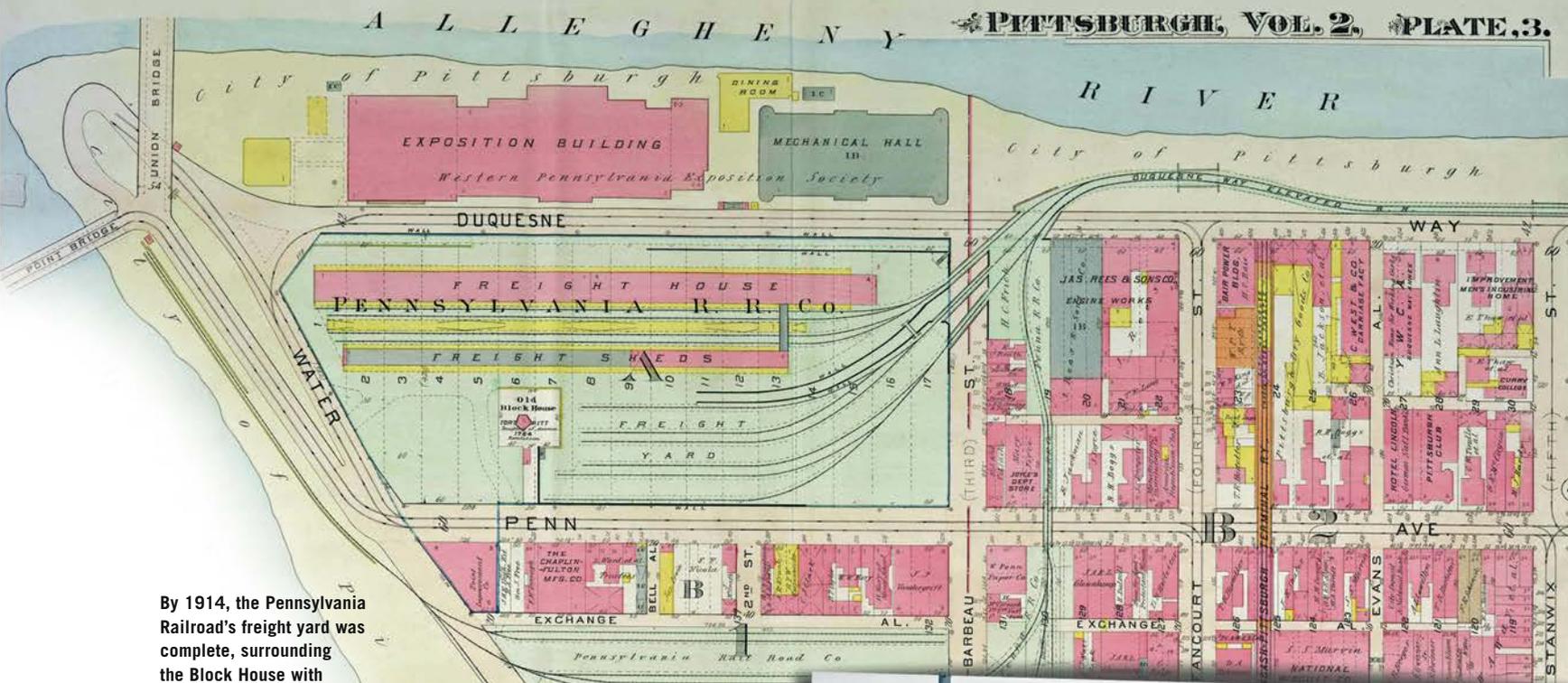
Block House from demolition. Luckily for Edith, Pennsylvania had just elected a new governor with a passion for historic preservation. Samuel W. Pennypacker was also against giving more power to railroads. Working with her husband, lawyer Samuel A. Ammon, Edith drafted a bill to protect the Block House and other historical structures in Pennsylvania from eminent domain by the railroads. This bill easily passed through the state House of Representatives, but it bogged down in the state Senate due to its anti-railroad position.<sup>28</sup>

Ammon spent a half year in the state capital lobbying for the bill. It was incredible to have a woman lobbying state legislature and attending meetings and conferences with congressmen. Because of her active involvement, Edith's bill became known throughout the state as the "Mrs. Ammon bill."<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately her bill was merged into another bill as a compromise with senators who supported the right of eminent domain for the railroad. Despite its support of eminent domain, Ammon supported the new bill since it ultimately protected the Block House. By spring 1903, both the House of Representatives and the Senate approved the bill; it needed only approval from Governor Pennypacker to be passed into law. Although he supported historic preservation, Pennypacker felt the bill gave too much power to the railroads. He also disliked how the bill only favored certain historic sites owned by private corporations. The bill was vetoed and dropped from any further legislation.<sup>30</sup>

While the Ammon bill sat in Harrisburg, a small committee from the Fort Pitt Society approached Frick, asking him to sell a portion of his property to the society so that more space could be provided around the Block House. Frick informed the ladies that he could not give them any of the Point property because it was no longer his to sell, having sold it to the railroad.<sup>31</sup> With the passing of an ordinance in March 1904 providing a right-of-way for the railroad at the Point, demolition of the tenements and other structures was scheduled to begin that October. The Fort Pitt Society immediately filed a lawsuit against the railroad in July 1904 for the potential damages to the Block House property due to the demolition and construction. Although the court battles with the DAR and the railroad would continue over the next several years, the women could not stop the transformation of the Point District into a rail yard filled with warehouses.<sup>32</sup>

The Fort Pitt Society gave in and allowed the demolition of its rental property within the strip of land leading to Penn Avenue. It had no choice but to use this strip as the main entrance to the Block House, but a new house was built within the strip to be used by a caretaker. The Fort Pitt Society filed for compensation from the city of Pittsburgh for the various damages to its property. After two years in the courts, this effort was somewhat successful in that it garnered the society \$12,000 in damages. While this amount was not nearly enough to cover the expenses of losing their rental and improving their property, the women considered it a small yet proud victory for the Block House.<sup>33</sup>

In February 1905, Edith Ammon drafted a new bill and traveled to Harrisburg to once again to find a representative who could introduce it into the legislature. Michael H. Kennedy, a young state representative from Pittsburgh who had a passion for history, agreed to sponsor the bill on behalf of the Fort Pitt Society. They worked for two years to get the bill passed into law, but were always thwarted by those supporting the railroads.<sup>34</sup>



By 1914, the Pennsylvania Railroad's freight yard was complete, surrounding the Block House with warehouses and train sheds.  
 University of Pittsburgh, Archives Service Center, G.M. Hopkins Maps Collections.

By 1907, the bill had passed through both the state House of Representatives and the state Senate but still needed the approval of new governor Edwin S. Stuart. Like his predecessor, Stuart was a supporter of historic preservation, and he signed the bill into law in May 1907.

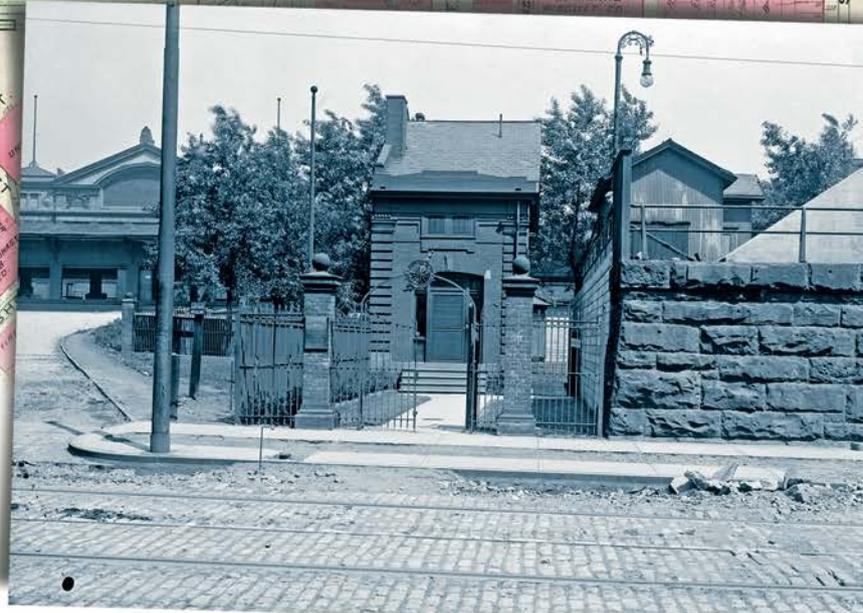
The law was mainly written by Edith Ammon herself to:

protect buildings used during the Colonial or Revolutionary period as a place of assembly by the Council of the Colony of Pennsylvania, or by the Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or by the Congress of the United States; or as against the land now occupied by any fort, redoubt, or blockhouse erected during said Colonial or Revolutionary period; or as against any building used as headquarters by the Commander-in-chief of the Continental Army.<sup>35</sup>

Four years later, Ammon reported to the members of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Fort Pitt Society, of the Daughters of the American Revolution, of all they had accomplished since first learning of the closing of Fort Street in 1901. Although the women had failed in their efforts to save the Point from becoming an industrial

rail yard, Edith reminded everyone that they had succeeded in saving the building they treasured, the Fort Pitt Block House.<sup>36</sup>

For the first half of the 20th century, the Point remained largely under the ownership of the Pennsylvania Railroad, but as rail business declined, so did the properties. By the 1940s, the Point had become a major eyesore when Point State Park was suggested and planned.



The Fort Pitt Society allowed the demolition of its rental property within the strip of land leading to Penn Avenue so that it could access the street, but it squeezed in this new caretaker's house, shown May 1915.  
 University of Pittsburgh, Archives Service Center, 715.152254.CP.

The railroad's property was acquired, ironically, through eminent domain, and the warehouses and other structures were demolished in the 1950s. The park itself was finally dedicated in 1974 with the completion of the Point State Park Fountain. The caretaker's house was demolished in 1966 to make way for the new Fort Pitt Museum, but the Fort Pitt Society remained the owner and operator of

the Block House with free office space inside the museum.<sup>37</sup>

The Block House remains where it's always been, its original 1764 construction largely intact. It is part of the National Historic Landmark of the Forks of the Ohio and is included within the Pittsburgh Renaissance Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. Once mired in slums, the Block House is now part of one of the most beautiful urban parks in the United States, receiving over 25,000 visitors every year. The year 2014 marks the structure's 250th anniversary as well as the 120th anniversary of its ownership by the Fort Pitt Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR).

Perhaps Edith Ammon had an idea of what the future held for the Block House and

the Point when she fought so hard for their preservation and survival:

Men—with but the thought of gain and gold were dreaming of tracks and trains, of massive walls and wreathing smoke from towering chimneys, while we dreamed of fame and power, of peaceful paths where once was strife, of space and breeze, of floating flags and trees, not smoke and noise. They planned for vandalism—we for patriotism. Patriotism wins.<sup>38</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Fahnestock, "Note to Map," *Fahnestock's Pittsburgh Directory for 1850* (Pittsburgh: George Parkin & Co., 1850). Republished by University of Pittsburgh Digital Research Library, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ruth Salisbury, "Pittsburgh's Great Romance," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 47, no. 4 (October 1964): 343–54; Marie McSwigan, "Stanton Heights Golf Links Is Shrine of City's History," *Pittsburgh Press*, November 2, 1929.

<sup>3</sup> *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from March 25, 1892, 9, Fort Pitt Society Collections; Mary Elizabeth Schenley to Amelia Neville Shields Oliver, May 23, 1892, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from June 10, 1892, 14–15, Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR Collections.

<sup>4</sup> Mary Elizabeth Schenley to Amelia Neville Shields Oliver, August 23, 1892, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from September 23, 1892, 18, Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR Collections.

<sup>5</sup> *Minutes 1891–1897 Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.*, minutes from September 23, 1892, 16–19, Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR Collections. The first directors for the board of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County were Julia K. Hogg, Anne McDowell Price Childs, Matilda

This image of Edith Ammon was most likely taken when the bill saving the Block House from eminent domain was signed into law in 1907. The language of the bill was mainly written by Ammon.

Fort Pitt Society Collections.



A major supporter of the saving the Block House from destruction, Representative Michael H. Kennedy helped the Fort Pitt Society by introducing the Ammon bill into the state Senate in 1907.

The Kennedy Family.

Wilkins Denny, Henrietta Logan Scott, Emily Black Moorhead, Margaret Irwin Hays, Amelia Neville Shields Oliver, Mary Lothrop Painter, and Carrie Morehead Holland.

<sup>6</sup> Allegheny County Court Book, 18:259–64; Allegheny County Court Book, 52:56–57. Allegheny County Department of Real Estate.

<sup>7</sup> Deed to Block House Property, Mary E. Schenley to Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, recorded April 28, 1894, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from October 11, 1895, and June 8, 1896, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., minutes from December 1, 1898; May 15, 1900; and June 9, 1900, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>13</sup> Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, *Fort Duquesne and Fort Pitt* (Pittsburgh: Privately printed, 1899), 37–38.

<sup>14</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from December 6, 1901, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., minutes from December 6, 1901, and December 13, 1901, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>16</sup> Kelly Linn, “Patriotism Wins: The Story of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the DAR and Its Fight to Save the Fort Pitt Block House,” lecture given to the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR, September 8, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Franklin F. Nicola to J. Harvey White, December 13, 1901, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>18</sup> *Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR/Fort Pitt Society Scrapbook, 1901–1902*, 5, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>19</sup> George T. Fleming, *History of Pittsburgh and Environs* (New York: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1922) 4:96–97.

<sup>20</sup> John Jordan, *Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania*, 3:1,544–46; George Reed, *Century Cyclopaedia of History & Biography* (Chicago: The Century Publishing and Engraving Co., 1904), 2:99–101; Fleming, 4:189–90.

<sup>21</sup> Herman Davis, *Reminiscences of General William Larimer* (Pittsburgh: privately printed, 1918), 20, 21, 99; Fleming, 4:313.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Hemphill Herbert, *Personal Memories of the Darlington Family*, 17–24; Darlington Digital Library, University of Pittsburgh, <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/d/darlington/index.html>; Edith Darlington

Ammon, *Pittsburgh Chapter D.A.R.: A Review of Ten Years, 1899–1909* (privately printed, 1909).

<sup>23</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from February 6 and February 13, 1902; *Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania v. Mary E. Schenley, Frank F. Nicola, John W. Herron, and the City of Pittsburgh*, Court of Common Pleas No. 2 of Allegheny County, No. 513, April Term, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>24</sup> “Report to the Members of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Given by the Board of Directors of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, PA, and the Advisory Committee of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” February 1, 1905, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>25</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1894–1902*, minutes from February 14, 1902, and March 29, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR/Fort Pitt Society Scrapbook, 1901–1902*, 84, 93, 96, 100, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>26</sup> *Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania v. Mary E. Schenley, Frank F. Nicola, John W. Herron, and the City of Pittsburgh*, Court of Common Pleas No. 2 of Allegheny County,



By 1945, the Point District had become an eyesore that city leaders wanted to improve. It was difficult to encourage people to visit the Block House due to its surroundings, plus it was barely visible beneath warehouses and retaining walls.

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No. 513, April Term, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections; *Daughters of the American Revolution of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania v. Mary E. Schenley, Frank F. Nicola, John W. Herron, and the City of Pittsburgh*, appealed to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, November 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>27</sup> *Scrapbook, 1901–1902*, 116–117; John Boucher, *Century and a Half of Pittsburgh and Her People* (Lewis Publishing Co., 1908), 2:451.

<sup>28</sup> *Scrapbook, 1903–1906*, 9, 11, 13; *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from April 3, 1903.

<sup>29</sup> *Scrapbook, 1903–1906*, 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23, 35, 45; *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from April 25, 1903.

<sup>31</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from April 25, 1903, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>32</sup> “Report to the Members of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Given by the Board of Directors of the DAR of Allegheny County, PA, and the Advisory Committee of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” February 1, 1905; *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from October 4, 1904; November 4, 1904; December 2, 1904; December 15, 1904, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>33</sup> *Minutes from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1902–1905*, minutes from October 4, 1904; November 4, 1904; December 2, 1904; December 15, 1904; May 8, 1905; September 26, 1905; and October 6, 1905, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>34</sup> “Annual Report 1907,” *Minutes of from the DAR of Allegheny County, 1906–1911*, Fort Pitt Society Collections; Gilbert Love, “Holding the Fort,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, November 25, 1958.

<sup>35</sup> “Edith Ammon’s Law,” Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>36</sup> Edith Ammon, “Statement of the Regent, Annual Meeting of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” report given to the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR, June 6, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

<sup>37</sup> Robert C. Alberts, *The Shaping of the Point: Pittsburgh’s Renaissance Park* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), 1–9, 99, 108, 110, 164; *Minutes of the Fort Pitt Society DAR of Allegheny County, PA, May 5, 1959 to April 17, 1965*, September 26, 1962, and January 23, 1963.

<sup>38</sup> Edith Ammon, “Statement of the Regent, Annual Meeting of the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR,” report given to the Pittsburgh Chapter NSDAR, June 6, 1902, Fort Pitt Society Collections.

**The Fort Pitt Block House still stands today, the jewel of Point State Park. It continues to be owned and operated by the Daughters of the American Revolution.**

Photo by Roy Engelbrecht.

